

Amendments to the Claims

Please cancel Claims 1-5, 7, 14 and 15.

Please amend Claim 6 as follows.

1-5 (Canceled).

6. (Currently Amended) An ink jet recording apparatus ~~according to Claim 3;~~ for performing image formation on a recording medium by using a recording head having plural discharge ports being arranged to discharge ink from the discharge ports, comprising:

preliminary discharging means for performing preliminary discharges by discharging ink from the discharge ports irrespective of the image formation;

capping means for enabling a cap for capping the plural discharge ports to be in contact with and retract from a discharge port surface of the recording head where the discharge ports are formed;

selection means for selecting whether the preliminary discharges are to be performed in the status of having said cap be in contact with the discharge port surface or in the status of having said cap be retracted from the discharge port surface, according to the number of ink discharges by said preliminary discharging means; and

suction means for sucking the ink in said cap by generating negative pressure in said cap, wherein when the preliminary discharges are performed in the status of having said cap in contact, said cap is communicated with the air outside, and suction is also effectuated by said suction means,

wherein the ink discharge number in the status of having said cap in contact is selected to be greater than the ink discharge number in the status of having said cap retracted.

wherein the discharge frequency in performing the suction and the preliminary discharges is lower than the discharge frequency in performing only the preliminary discharges.

7. (Canceled).

8. (Previously Presented) An ink jet recording apparatus for performing image formation on a recording medium by using a recording head having plural discharge ports being arranged to discharge ink from the discharge ports, comprising:

preliminary discharging means for performing preliminary discharges by discharging ink from the discharge ports irrespective of the image formation;

capping means for enabling a cap for capping the plural discharge ports to be in contact with and retract from a discharge port surface of the recording head where the discharge ports are formed; and

selection means for selecting whether suction by suction means and the preliminary discharges are to be performed in the status of having said cap be in contact with the discharge port surface and having the inside of said cap communicated with the air outside, the preliminary discharges are to be performed in the status of having said cap be in contact with the discharge port surface, or the preliminary discharges are to be

performed in the status of having the cap be retracted from the discharge port surface, according to the number of ink discharges by said preliminary discharging means, wherein the ink discharge number of the suction and the preliminary discharges being performed in the status of having said cap in contact is selected to be greater than the ink discharge number of the preliminary discharges being performed in the status of having said cap in contact, and the ink discharge number of the preliminary discharges being performed in the status of having said cap in contact is selected to be greater than the ink discharge number in the status of having said cap retracted.

9. (Previously Presented) An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 8, wherein when the preliminary discharges are to be performed in the status of having said cap retracted, the preliminary discharges are performed toward said cap or the preliminary discharges are performed toward an ink receiving portion other than said cap.

10. (Previously Presented) An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 8, wherein when the suction and the preliminary discharges are performed, the suction is performed for a designated time in the status of having the inside of said cap communicated with the air outside after the preliminary discharges terminate.

11. (Previously Presented) An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 8, wherein when the suction and the preliminary discharges are performed, the suction is performed for a designated time in the status of having the inside of said cap communicated with the air outside before the preliminary discharges begin.

12. (Previously Presented) An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 8, wherein the discharge frequency in performing the suction and the preliminary discharges is lower than the discharge frequency in performing only the preliminary discharges.

13. (Previously Presented) An ink jet recording apparatus according to Claim 8, further comprising wiping means for wiping off the ink adhering to the discharge port surface, wherein when a predetermined number of preliminary discharges is executed by said preliminary discharging means, said wiping means wipes off the ink adhering to the discharge port surface.

14 and 15. (Canceled).